

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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DEPT FOR D/HA, AR/USOAS AND ARA/ECA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, PINS, AR
SUBJECT: CASASBELLAS RESIGNS FROM "LA OPINION" AND ATTACKS TIMERMAN

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 3133, (B) BUENOS AIRES 3293

1. "LA NACION" OF MAY 8 REPRINTED AN EXTENSIVE STATEMENT BY RAMIRO DE CASASBELLAS SETTING FORTH THE REASONS FOR HIS RESIGNATION FROM "LA OPINION," WHICH WAS SUBMITTED MAY 3. CASASBELLAS HAD BEEN THE THIRD MAN IN LINE IN "LA OPINION'S" EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT SINCE LATE 1973 AND BRIEFLY SERVED AS THAT PAPER'S "RESPONSIBLE EDITOR" FOLLOWING THE ARREST OF OWNER JACOBO TIMERMAN AND MANAGING EDITOR ENRIQUE JARA (FROM APR 26, UNTIL HIS RESIGNATION). CASASBELLAS' PRINCIPAL POINTS MAY BE OF INTEREST TO THE DEPARTMENT AND ARE RECAPITULATED HERE, AS THEY TEND TO CORROBORATE JARA'S CONDEMNATION OF TIMERMAN (REPORTED REFTEL B).

2. CASASBELLAS' ESSENTIAL POINTS FOLLOW:

(A) WHEN HE JOINED "LA OPINION," TIMERMAN TOLD HIM THAT THE PAPER WAS TOTALLY OWNED BY THE TIMERMAN FAMILY. HOWEVER,
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DURING POLICE CROSSEXAMINATION OF APRIL 21 (AT WHICH CASASBELLAS WAS PRESENT) TIMERMAN DECLARED THAT THE NEWSPAPER'S CAPITAL SHARES ORIGINALLY WERE DISTRIBUTED AS FOLLOWS: DAVID GRAIVER--45 PCT, TIMERMAN--45 PCT, AND JORGE A. ROTENBERG--10 PCT. FOLLOWING THE ENTERPRISE'S RECAPITALIZATION AT THE END OF 1976, GRAIVER'S SHARES WERE REDUCED TO A SMALL PERCENTAGE. NEVERTHELESS, NOTES CASASBELLAS, OLTA S.A.C.I. PRINTED A

NOTICE (AT THE BEHEST OF THE SENIOR EDITORIAL STAFF) FOLLOWING JACOBO TIMERMAN'S ARREST STATING (FALSELY OR INCORRECTLY) THAT GRAIVER NEVER HAD ANY OWNERSHIP INTEREST IN THE ENTERPRISE.

(B) TIMERMAN'S SIGNED STATEMENT TO THE POLICE THAT HE WAS A MARXIST AND IMPLYING THAT MARXISM WAS THE OVERRIDING GUIDING PRINCIPLE BEHIND THE NEWSPAPER CAME AS A SURPRISE TO CASASBELLAS. TIMERMAN HAD NEVER MADE SUCH AN ASSERTION TO HIM BEFORE.

(C) IN HIS SIGNED STATEMENT TIMERMAN ALSO ATTEMPTED TO SLOUGH OFF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PAPER'S EDITORIAL POLICY TO THE SENIOR STAFF, WHEN IN REALITY, SAYS CASASBELLAS, TIMERMAN'S STYLE WAS "CENTRALIST AND DOMINATING."

(D) CASASBELLAS HAD INTENDED TO RESIGN FROM THE PAPER APRIL 23 BECUASE TIMERMAN HAD "FOOLED HIM AND ABUSED HIS CONFIDENCE IN MATTERS SO IMPORTANT AS THESE." HOWEVER, HE WAS PERSUADED TO STAY ON BECAUSE THE REST OF THE EDITORIAL STAFF THREATENED TO RESIGN EN MASSE ALONG WITH HIM, AND THIS WOULD HAVE MEANT THE END OF THE PAPER AND THROWING OUT ONTO THE STREET OF 400 EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS. HE THEREUPON AGREED TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PAPER'S EDITORIAL POLICY, ASSISTED BY A COUNCIL COMPOSED OF THE OTHER EDITORS, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE COURTS REACHED A VERDICT IN MR. TIMERMAN'S CASE.

(E) HOWEVER, TWO ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENTS CAUSED HIM TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECONSIDER THIS DECISION. FIRSTLY, SUBORDINATE PERSONNEL IN THE NEWSPAPER ISSUED A STATEMENT SUGGESTING THEY WERE NOT IN ACCORD WITH THE ARRANGEMENT WHICH THE EDITORIAL STAFF HAD MADE WITH THE TIMERMAN FAMILY. SECONDLY, THE FAMILY DISMISSED JARA BECAUSE OF THE LATTER'S STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS EXPRESSING HIS DEMORALIZED SPIRIT ("EQUAL TO MINE," SAYS CASASBELLAS) AS A RESULT OF TIMERMAN'S TESTIMONY TO THE POLICE. ON TOP OF THAT, IT WAS FURTHER REVEALED THAT TIMERMAN HAD ADMITTED HAVING RECEIVED LOANS GUARANTEED BY GRAIVER.

(F) IN VIEW OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS, CASASBELLAS SAID, HE COULD NOT CONTINUE TO EXERCISE RESPONSIBILITY OVER A NEWSPAPER CREATED WITH THE FUNDS OF A MAN (GRAIVER) "WHOSE CONNECTIONS WITH THE GUERRILLAS HAVE BEEN PROVEN (SIC) BY THE AUTHORITIES." HE WAS, MOREOVER, MOVED TO TAKE THIS ACTION, CASASBELLAS SAID, BECAUSE TIMERMAN HAD ADMITTED TO HIM AND JARA THAT HE HAD DECEIVED THEM CONCERNING THE PAPER'S OWNERSHIP, HAD AMORALLY ATTEMPTED TO AFFIX RESPONSIBILITY ON HIS STAFF WHEN IT DID NOT BELONG THERE AND BECAUSE HIS AFFIRMA-

TION TO THE POLICE AS TO HIS IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION (I.E. MARXISM) "WAS DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO OUR OWN (I.E. JARA AND CASASBELLAS) AND UNDOUBTEDLY TO THE REST OF THE SENIOR STAFF" WHICH HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE ORIGINAL AGREEMENT TO FORM A "DEMOCRATIC AND PLURALISTIC NEWSPAPER, DEFENDER OF INSTITUTIONS, NATIONAL SECURITY AND PEACE AND ENEMY OF SUBVERSION AND ALL FORMS OF TOTALITARIANISM."

3. COMMENT: DURING OUR REFTEL BE CONVERSATIONS, THE SUBJECT OF THAT CONVERSATION MADE A STATEMENT OF SURPRISE AS TO TIMERMAN'S RECENT AFFIRMATION AS A MARXIST, BUT HE COUPLED IT WITH A WORD OF CAUTION AS TO POSSIBLY HOW SUCH AN AFFIRMATION MAY HAVE BEEN EXTRACTED BY THE POLICE.

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